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VOLUME 3

# Lesotho

## Revised Edition

Deborah Johnston

Compiler



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## Introduction

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small, mountainous country (30,350 square kilometres) completely surrounded by South Africa. It is similar in size to Belgium and slightly larger than the American state of Maryland. Like many developing countries, Lesotho's statistical output is not without errors. However, it is worth presenting a statistical introduction to the country. An inter-censal estimate places the 1995 population at approximately 2.1 million, increasing at an annual rate of about 2.8 per cent. While the urban population is also growing fast, the country remains predominantly rural. In 1995, it was estimated that 83 per cent of the population lived in rural areas. However, data for the pre-drought year of 1990 show that agriculture accounted for only 20.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

A large proportion of the male labour force works in South Africa, principally in the mining sector. Given the nature of South African influx regulations, this migration is oscillating, i.e. the migrant regularly returns home. Thus, the working population has not had the option to permanently migrate to the urban areas of South Africa. As will be discussed below, migrant remittances are an extremely important contribution to Lesotho's Gross National Product (GNP). In 1990, Lesotho's average per capita GNP of US\$530 was one of the highest among low-income countries. However, the number of miners has declined in recent years, while the labour force has continued to grow. No other significant sources of alternative employment have emerged, and Lesotho appears to be experiencing an employment crisis of major proportions.

Out of the data arises the complex picture of a predominantly rural-based population, where agriculture accounts for less than a quarter of output and there is a strong historical trend for male labour migration. These trends will be explained in subsequent sections of the introduction. The people of Lesotho, the Basotho, are relatively homogeneous in terms of culture and there is a single national language, Sesotho. In addition, a large number of culturally and ethnically similar people live in South Africa, and the Sotho-speaking people as a whole are usually



# Indexes

There follow three separate indexes: authors (personal and corporate); titles; and subjects. Title entries are italicized and refer either to the main titles, or to many of the other works cited in the annotations. The numbers refer to bibliographical entry rather than page numbers. Individual index entries are arranged in alphabetical sequence.

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